



Sustainability of Erasmus Mundus Master Courses

Best practice guide based on survey results and analysis

May 2017



© European Union, 2017

For any use or reproduction of photos which are not under European Union copyright, permission must be sought directly from the copyright holder(s).

© photos: Shutterstock.com (Cover, pgs 2, 40 & 42) & others European Commission

ISBN: 978-92-9492-535-0

doi: 10.2797/019359

Authors:

Christine VOELKL

Francesco Maria PIROCCHI

This report has been produced and prepared by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)

Unit A3 - Erasmus+ : Higher Education - Joint Master Degrees

Office address: Rue Joseph II, 59 - 1000 Brussels - Belgium

Postal address: Avenue du Bourget, 1 - 1140 Brussels - Belgium

HOW TO OBTAIN EU PUBLICATIONS

Free publications:

- one copy:
via EU Bookshop (<http://bookshop.europa.eu>);
- more than one copy or posters/maps:
from the European Union's representations (http://ec.europa.eu/represent_en.htm);
from the delegations in non-EU countries (http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/index_en.htm);
by contacting the Europe Direct service (http://europa.eu/europedirect/index_en.htm) or
calling 00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11 (freephone number from anywhere in the EU) (*).

(*). The information given is free, as are most calls (though some operators, phone boxes or hotels may charge you).

Priced publications:

- via EU Bookshop (<http://bookshop.europa.eu>).

Priced subscriptions:

- via one of the sales agents of the Publications Office of the European Union (http://publications.europa.eu/others/agents/index_en.htm).

Sustainability of Erasmus Mundus Master Courses

Best practice guide based on
survey results and analysis

May 2017



TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD	5
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	6 - 8
SUSTAINABILITY CHECKLIST	9
INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY	10
GENERAL STATISTICS	11 - 12
Number of replies and response rate	11
Profile of the respondents	12
MAIN FINDINGS	13 - 29
Number of active/inactive masters	13
Means to ensure the sustainability of master programmes	14 - 15
When to implement a sustainability strategy	15 - 16
Changes to the masters after the EU funding period	16 - 17
Number of replies and response rate	17 - 19
Information channels and promotion tools adopted	
Enrolment of students	19
Other scholarship opportunities	20
Visiting scholars and guest lecturers	20 - 21
Degrees awarded	21 - 23
Employability of graduates	23 - 25
Difficulties encountered	26
Institutional impact	26 - 29
TESTIMONIALS OF SUCCESSFUL MASTERS	30 - 39
Sustainability strategies	30 - 32
Course attractiveness	32 - 34
Course delivery	34 - 37
“Jointness” and internationalisation	37 - 39
CONCLUSIONS	41
BIBLIOGRAPHY	43

FOREWORD

Dear Reader,

In March 2016, the unit responsible for Erasmus+ : Higher Education, Erasmus Mundus Joint Master degrees in the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) launched a Survey on the sustainability of Erasmus Mundus Master Courses (EMMCs), to collect information on the factors that ensured the continuity of master programmes once the funding from the European Union had ceased.

It is with great pleasure that we share with you the following Report, containing the result of the analysis of the data gathered through the Survey.

Over the last 10 years, EACEA has supported more than 300 Joint master programmes, providing an approximate amount of 19.000 scholarships to students from around 200 different countries. We are proud of such achievements and of the remarkable leaps forward in the level of integration and internationalisation produced by the EMMCs in line with the Bologna Process. One of our greatest ambitions is that the programmes will continue to implement their activities without the funding from the European Union, in a process of constant development. For this reason, we believe that the issue of sustainability is of primary importance.

This Report aims at identifying key factors and good practice examples that have allowed EMMCs to remain sustainable in the long run without financial support from the Erasmus Mundus programme. By collecting data, feedback and insights on programme design and management, we intend to assist higher education institutions in devising successful sustainability strategies.

It is definitely a challenge worth facing to ensure the sustainability of such highly prestigious courses in the long run. I am convinced that the good practice examples identified in this Report will stimulate further investigation and generate new ideas and approaches. We have gathered here the experiences of former coordinators, as well as recent findings and fresh analyses. The Report is also part of an on-going reflection on sustainability, which I am confident will lead to more initiatives in the next months.

Please visit our website <http://eacea.ec.europa.eu> to learn more about the activities of EACEA, as well as about Erasmus+ and the other programmes managed by the Agency.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all the trainees who have contributed to the realisation of this Report, Francesco Maria PIROCCHI, and to the implementation of the Survey, Jasmina ŠARIĆ, Gerard BROS PEREZ and Fanchon LEFÈVRE.

I look forward to continuing working with you or welcoming you as a new partner in the future.



Brian HOLMES
Director

Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Report outlines the results of a Survey on the sustainability of Erasmus Mundus Master Courses (EMMCs), which was launched in March 2016 by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) of the European Commission. It was submitted to the coordinators of all master courses (64) selected under Erasmus Mundus calls for proposals from 2004 to 2010, and which ended their last EU-funded intake in September 2016 at the latest¹. 39 replies were received and form the sample, corresponding to a response rate of 61%: 8 projects from 2004 (6 of which were selected again in 2010), 3 from 2005 (all selected again in 2010), 3 from 2007, 10 from 2008 and 15 from 2010.

The aim of this Report is to identify **key factors and practices** that have allowed EMMCs to remain sustainable in the long run without EU funding. Sustainability is increasingly considered in the selection and evaluation of Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees and it is important in the management of joint programmes. Its definition as outlined in the *Handbook on Sustainability* is:

“A project is sustainable when it continues to deliver benefits to [its] beneficiaries and/or other constituencies for an extended period after the Commission’s financial assistance has been terminated”²

This broad description encompasses not just financial aspects but also **many others**, including integration, continued cooperation, added value, innovation, quality, visibility, employability and transparency³. The benefits of a project can be numerous and have different effects. A sustainable programme is not necessarily one that maintains exactly the same structure as during the funded period (although this can be a remarkable achievement): changes, new developments, different approaches and solutions are all part of the natural evolution of a project, as long as it still delivers an added value to the institutions and to the students. All master coordinators have reported that the Erasmus Mundus programme has had **a positive, long-term impact** on their institution, especially concerning international visibility, the improvement of didactic practices and administrative procedures and the development of research collaborations.

The positive impact of the Erasmus+ programme has been acknowledged by the increase of the budget in 2017 by almost € 300 million compared to 2016 (+ 13%), a record rise since the start of the programme. The importance of Erasmus+ was stressed by the European Commission’s President Mr **Jean-Claude JUNCKER** in his annual *State of the EU speech* on 14 September 2016. The Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Mr **Tibor NAVRACSICS**, recently commented:

“Ahead of its 30th anniversary next year, Erasmus+ offers more opportunities for people and projects than ever before”⁴

¹ The total number of master courses funded between 2004 and 2010 amounts to 183. This includes, however, projects that were reselected between 2010 and 2013. Taking this into consideration, and given the aforementioned criteria used to select projects for the survey, the number of masters included in the sample is equal to 64.

² EC-DG EAC, *Handbook on Sustainability*, Luxembourg, 2006. See also *ivi*, pp. 5-7

³ See EACEA, *Mastering Joint Excellence under Erasmus Mundus. Conclusions of the conference on Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees, Brussels, 29-30 June 2016* (2017) Workshop 3: Promotion; visibility and sustainability, pp. 20-22.

⁴ See the *EC Daily News*, 20 October 2016. See also EC-DG EAC *Erasmus Impact Study. Effects of mobility on the skills and employability of students and the internationalisation of Higher Education institutions*, 2014.

Of the 39 masters that have replied to the Survey, 19 (49%) are still active and ensuring their sustainability mainly through fees paid by self-funded students (64% of replies) and through public funding (26%). They have all adopted different tools to promote and communicate their activities (such as websites, social media, dedicated events and alumni associations) and still host students from Partner countries. Most have made changes in the organisation of the programmes in the following sectors: consortium members (74% of replies), mobility paths (58%), structure of the curricula and contents of the courses (53%).

Survey respondents were asked a set of questions with the possibility to add individual comments, thus allowing for qualitative feedback, which, in certain cases, has been included in the section of the report on testimonials. The Survey addressed **a variety of aspects** linked to the broader theme of sustainability and this Report examines the replies through a series of charts, analyses and comments concerning the following topics.

- **Means to ensure the sustainability of master programmes**
- **Timing and implementation of the sustainability strategy**
- **Changes to the programmes following the end of EU funding**
- **Information channels and promotion tools adopted**
- **Enrolment of students**
- **Number of Partner country students hosted outside of the EU-funded scheme**
- **Scholarship opportunities apart from the Erasmus Mundus scheme**
- **Visiting scholars and guest lecturers**
- **Type of degree awarded**
- **Employability of graduates**
- **Difficulties encountered**
- **Institutional impact**

In addition to the statistical data gathered through the Survey, the Report presents **testimonials** collected from follow-up telephone interviews that were conducted individually with a selected group of respondents. They were asked to further develop the experiences and good practice examples they cited in their answers to the questionnaire. Their responses revealed valuable insights and approaches that can be replicated in the future, or that can be used as a starting ground to develop new initiatives and strategies. These testimonials have been classified according to the following categories:

SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGIES

The examples in this category provide useful suggestions on resource management, on how to reduce or limit costs and expenses, and on the means to achieve sustainability.

COURSE ATTRACTIVENESS

The examples in this category illustrate how to maintain the inflow of students by strengthening the attractiveness of the courses. It is especially important to attract self-paying students, who are the main source of income for master programmes.

COURSE DELIVERY

EMMCs are expected to provide a high standard of teaching. Financial difficulties and expenditures are however critical factors that can limit the capacity of institutions to achieve the expected results. Examples in this category suggest innovative ways of containing the costs of course delivery, without losing its quality.

"JOINTNESS" AND INTERNATIONALISATION

"Jointness" is a key factor in the management of the courses and internationalisation is an asset for the visibility and attractiveness of the institutions. Examples of how to increase both are provided under this category.

The Report concludes that instead of formulating definite solutions, or a standardised set of rules to follow, **taylor-made sustainability** strategies need to be developed for each master programme. The Report outlines a broader framework for intervention and some contextual guidelines that will help consortia to maximise the results and impact of their funded activities. The intention is to channel the experiences of previous programmes into **solid practices** and **innovative improvements** for future generations of joint masters. Nevertheless, developing a new master course remains a challenging and demanding task. Numerous factors should be taken into consideration, sustainability being one. Based on the analysis of the results EACEA has developed a **checklist** that provides indications and suggestions on how to deliver a joint master programme, how to organise the work and, on the essential aspects of sustainability.

SUSTAINABILITY CHECKLIST

- ✓ Include sustainability in the **original design** of the master course: it must be a central issue from the start. Explain at the **application stage** what initiatives you intend to take to ensure sustainability
- ✓ Gather **information, data, and examples of good practices** on sustainability. Use this Report and the references listed in the bibliography. **Networking** activities are also important to exchange views and opinions with colleagues from other institutions
- ✓ Make a **financial plan**: calculate expenses, costs, and resources needed
- ✓ Involve **all consortium members** in setting up the sustainability strategy; if you need additional assistance, you could consider hiring an **expert**
- ✓ Learn from **previous experiences**, but be creative at the same time. **New developments** can be as successful as existing procedures
- ✓ Identify **key issues and initiatives**, create a strategy, and outline a detailed **action plan**: you need to know who is going to do what and when
- ✓ Financial aspects are of primary importance, of course, but sustainability is **multifaceted** and needs a broad approach. This includes issues such as students' employability, visibility, communication, etc.
- ✓ **Do not wait** – the earlier the issue of sustainability is tackled, the better!

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

This Report outlines the results of the Survey on the sustainability of Erasmus Mundus Master Courses (EMMCs) launched in March 2016 by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) of the European Commission (EC). EMMC are high-level courses expected to represent and increase the quality and attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Sustainability is one of the main challenges for these courses.

The aim of the Survey was to shed light on factors and practices that have allowed certain EMMC (now EMJMDs) to remain sustainable without EU funding. The Survey was followed by ad hoc interviews with selected consortia. The responses provided by the participants are summarized in this Report and presented to the reader in a series of graphics. The Report gathers data, feedback, and insights on programme design and management, in order to promote the implementation of successful sustainability plans through a process of learning from previous experiences. This should enable current and future EMJMD coordinators to take optimal decisions, develop successful strategies and adopt appropriate tools.

All responses to the Survey have been processed into a table structure and the most significant issues have been identified and analysed. When required, respondents were asked for clarification. This has resulted in a critical evaluation of the key factors for the sustainability of EMMC, as identified by programme coordinators themselves. Responses to this Survey highlight the features that appear essential in ensuring sustainability, as well as the most common difficulties encountered. Testimonials have been collected, from the replies to the survey and follow-up interviews, and are presented at the end of the Report. They focus on, but are not necessarily limited to, sustainability strategies of master programmes, the implementation of services that address students' needs, course delivery and teaching methodologies of the programmes, as well as academic and administrative internationalisation and "jointness"⁵.

The core and critical issue behind all these questions remains how to obtain sufficient funding to continue a joint programme. Given the differences across disciplines and programmes, such as sponsorship potential, funding, marketability and willingness of students to pay, there is no single solution that fits every course. Sustainability is a complex and multi-faceted issue; a tailor-made sustainability strategy needs to be developed for each individual master. The data analysis presented here does not, therefore, provide a set of standardised rules. The 2012 *Thematic cluster on sustainability* had already highlighted the importance of sustainability. It presented practical guidelines, based on the previous experience, and outlined key elements in the realisation of sustainable programmes, such as the development of a clear strategy, the integration of the programme in the institutions of the consortia, the identification of alternative sources of funding and the importance of the attractiveness of the programme⁶. Building on these conclusions and enriching them with further data and analysis, this Survey Report outlines a broader framework for intervention and some contextual guidelines to help Higher Education institutions (HEIs) maximise the results and impact of their funded activities.

Before tackling the issues mentioned above, the following section presents some general statistics from the survey.

⁵ "Jointness" refers to a high degree of integration within the EMJMD consortia at all levels: student selection procedures, curriculum design and implementation, exams and assessments, student services, administrative and financial management, quality assurance mechanisms and performance assessment, promotion and dissemination strategies, etc. It may also involve the award of a joint degree.

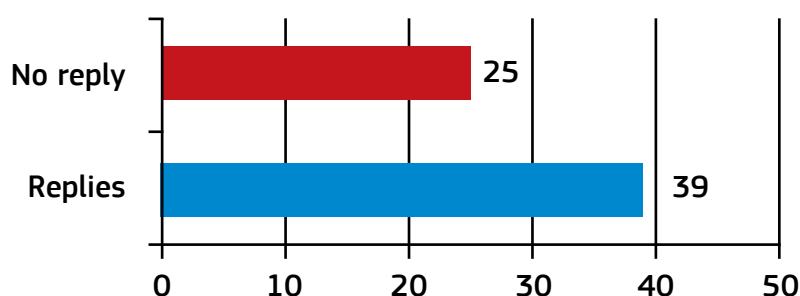
⁶ See the *Erasmus Mundus Practical Guidelines. Clustering joint programmes and attractiveness projects: Thematic cluster on sustainability*, 2012, p. 35.

GENERAL STATISTICS

Number of replies and response rate

64 EMMC coordinators, funded under calls for proposals **from 2004 to 2010**, were contacted. Only masters that have ended their last EM-funded intake in September 2016, at the latest, were included. This means that the programmes taken into account for the Survey **no longer** receive EU funding. A total of 39 master coordinators replied to the Survey representing a **response rate of 61%**.

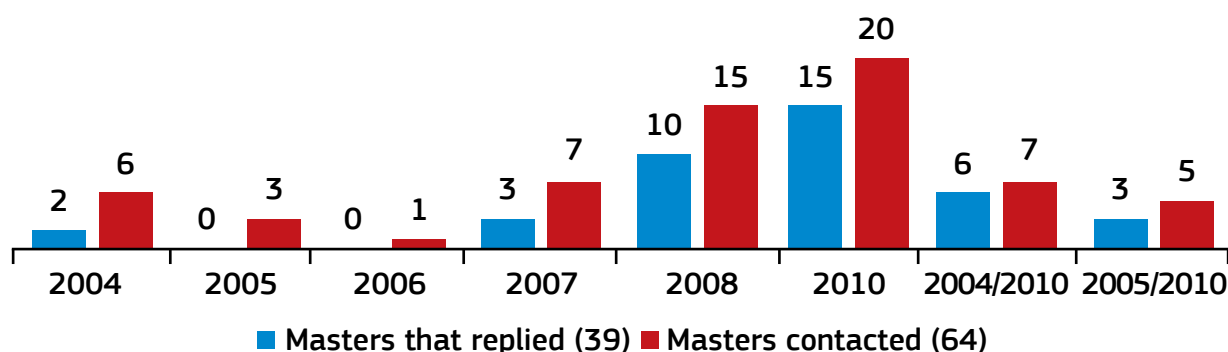
Table 1: Number of replies



After the closure of the Survey, quantitative and qualitative data were analysed. Follow-up interviews were conducted, to identify good practice examples, explore institutional changes after the EU funding period, and better understand the main challenges. **Seven coordinators (~18% of the sample) were contacted and interviewed by telephone.** This Report presents both the results of the survey and the feedback from these interviews – the latter focusing on testimonials that should be helpful for future EM masters coordinators and all the stakeholders in the EM community.

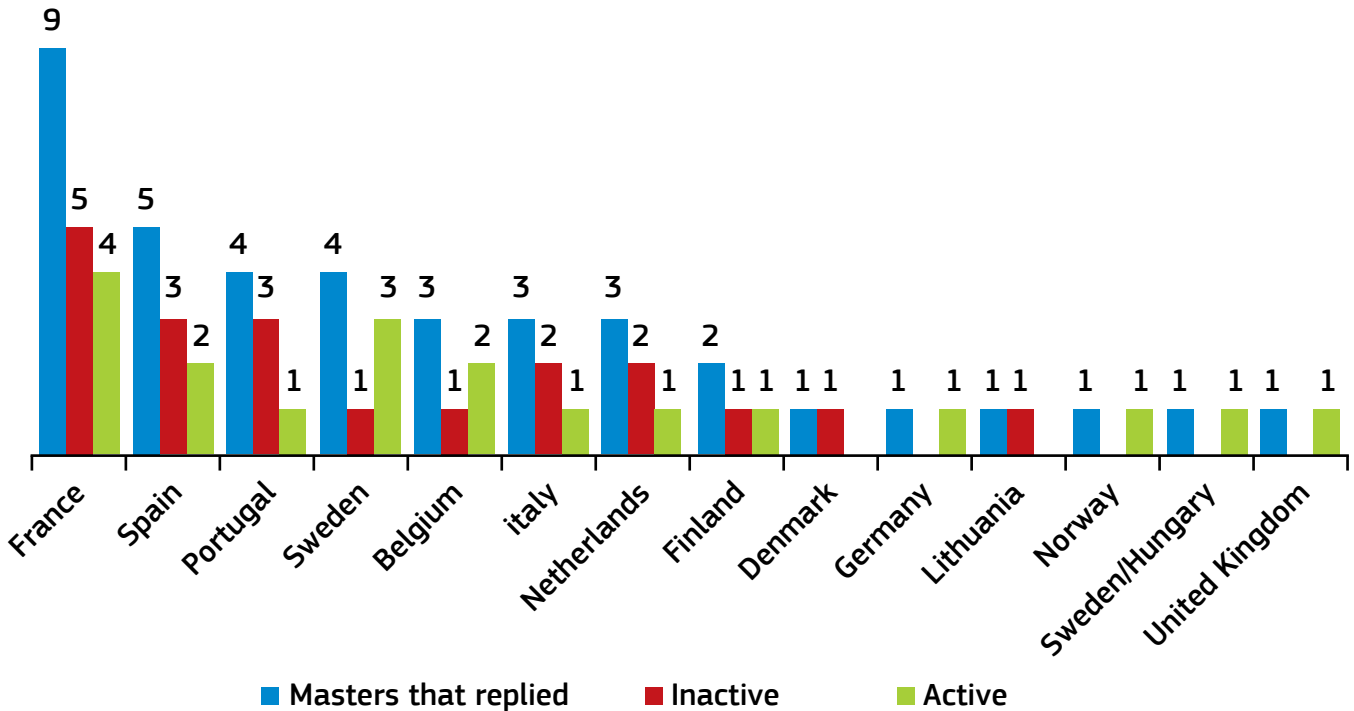
Respondents to the survey have been coordinating masters over a total period of over ten years. Some of the courses covered by the Survey were initiated in 2004, when the EM programme was launched; others started in 2010 and ended their last EU-funded intake only in September 2016. The following table shows the number of responses received according to the starting year of the master. Response rates are higher among more recent master courses, however, experienced coordinators whose first programmes started in 2004 or 2005 and were selected again in 2010 have also replied (data related to these can be seen below). No EM call for proposal was issued in 2009.

Table 2: Breakdown per selection year of respondents



Profile of the respondents

Table 3: Geographical distribution of respondents



The sample consists of coordinators from **14 different European countries**. France is the most represented country with 9 institutions (~23% of the sample), followed by Spain (5 institutions, amounting to ~13% of the sample). Portugal and Sweden participated with 4 institutions each (~10%). Belgian, Dutch, and Italian institutions amount to ~8% of the total each. Finland (2 institutions) represents ~5% of the sample, while Denmark, Germany, Lithuania, Norway, and the U.K., with one institution, make for ~2.5% each. In one case, the coordinator changed after the end of the European funding from a Swedish institution to a Hungarian one (~2.5% of the sample).

The following section presents the main findings of the Survey. These should give current and future coordinators and consortia an understanding of the critical areas to be addressed in order to achieve sustainability. A sound understanding of these issues is fundamental to developing integrated and coherent sustainability strategies.

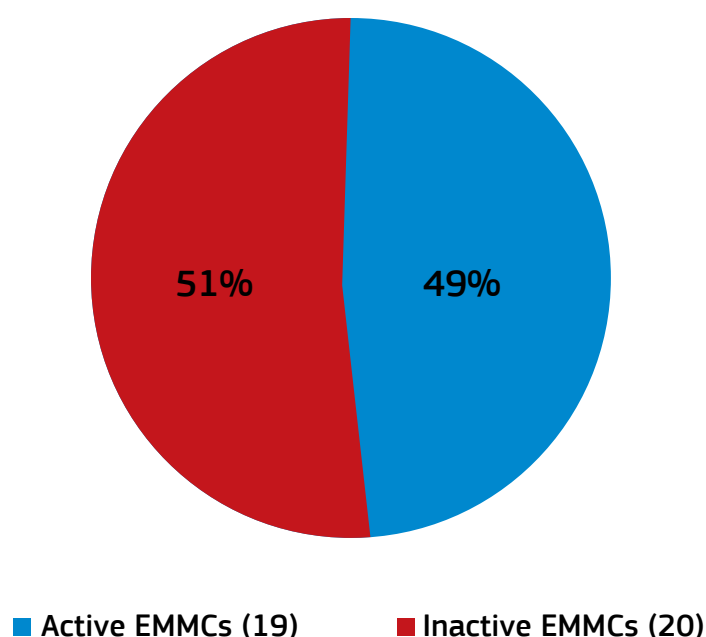
MAIN FINDINGS

Sustainability is one of the **key factors** in the management of Erasmus Mundus master programmes. It entails a variety of aspects, such as “funding diversification, sustained leadership commitment, the relevance of the course vis-à-vis social needs, the evolution of international policies and priorities amongst the consortium partners⁷”. Its importance has been discussed on different occasions (most recently, in June 2016 at the Conference “Mastering Joint Excellence under Erasmus Mundus”⁸). As much as the EM programme in its twelve years of existence has had a transformative impact on the EHEA, EM master courses require considerable investment in terms of time and resources. Sustainability can only be the result of a **collective effort** from the consortia; it requires an **accurate understanding** of all the different elements at stake and **careful planning**.

Number of active / inactive masters

Sustainability has become a major issue for a number of EMMCs, once EU funding ends. 19 programmes in our sample (~49% of the total replies) have continued without EM financial support. The remaining 20 masters (~51%) have ceased their activities.

Table 4: Number of active and inactive masters after the end of EU funding



⁷ B. Delpouve, *Managing Joint Programmes*, in EC-DG EAC, *Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters Degrees. The story so far*, Brussels, 2016, p. 49 (47-58).

⁸ See EACEA, *Mastering Joint Excellence under Erasmus Mundus. Conclusions of the conference on Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees*, Brussels, 29-30 June 2016.

Means to ensure the sustainability of master programmes

19 masters in our sample continue without EU funding, despite the high costs of joint programmes (management costs are estimated to be three times higher than those of programmes based in a single institution)⁹. In order to ensure sufficient financial resources and switch to a self-funded model, these masters had to develop **financial planning** and identify **alternative sources** of income. A sound **knowledge of the cost** of each programme is a prerequisite.

Programmes which have remained financially sustainable have developed various strategies. The most common (64%) is to rely on **fees** paid by students. This means that the quality of the project design must be taken into consideration: a master course should be designed to meet the specific needs of the students who, will be motivated to make a financial investment. Since such needs can change over time, consortia should continuously adapt to developments in the field by implementing the following measures:

- **Undertake assessments** of their target groups to meet their present and future requirements
- **Analyse market trends** to identify potential beneficiaries
- **Innovate contents** to remain attractive over time

Public funding is the second biggest source of income (26%) for the masters in our sample that are still active. This requires the support of national authorities and local institutions which may be provided in the form of financial contributions, communication and political support and, most notably, accreditation (it is advisable to verify the possibilities for and threats to accreditation during the design stage of the master course). To secure backing from public bodies, consortia are recommended to:

- **Enhance the attractiveness and visibility** of the project, stressing its added value for public institutions
- **Identify actors** who can ensure the financing of the project
- **Identify any cultural or economic obstacle** that could hinder political and socio-economic support
- **Actively lobby** both the relevant Ministries and universities to secure resources
- **Include stakeholders in the project** who can gain public support

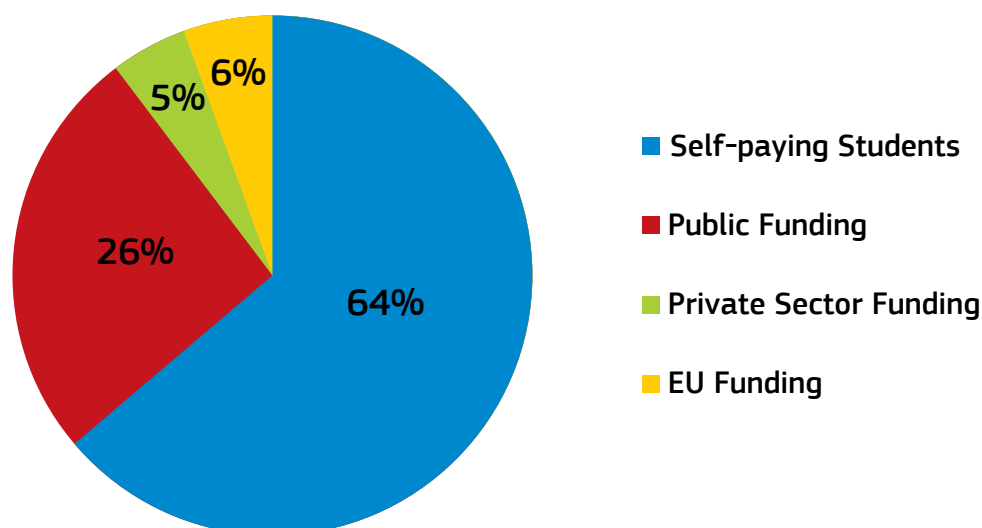
EU funding remains a solution to obtaining resources, even if only to a lesser degree (6%). It is advisable to monitor the different opportunities at European level; an experienced manager of international projects can be an asset to make sure that possible opportunities are taken up.

Private sector funding is another means to ensure sustainability, although adopted by a small percentage of active masters in the Survey (5%). To attract funding from the private sector, the same suggestions apply as those mentioned above for public funding. In addition to these, other strategic initiatives can include:

⁹ B. Delpouve, *Managing Joint Programmes*, in EC-DG EAC, *Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters Degrees. The story so far*, Brussels, 2016, p. 55 (47-58).

- **involve and encourage the active participation** of private companies e.g. through the organization of training sessions for students delivered by the companies, or the promotion of agreements between the consortium and private partners (e.g. in the form of generic collaboration or internship schemes)
- **include** stakeholders with links and connections to the private sector who can leverage companies to ensure support and participation
- **identify the fields and companies** that can benefit from the research and the skills of graduates
- **study the needs** of private companies and anticipate future trends in the market to provide them with added value

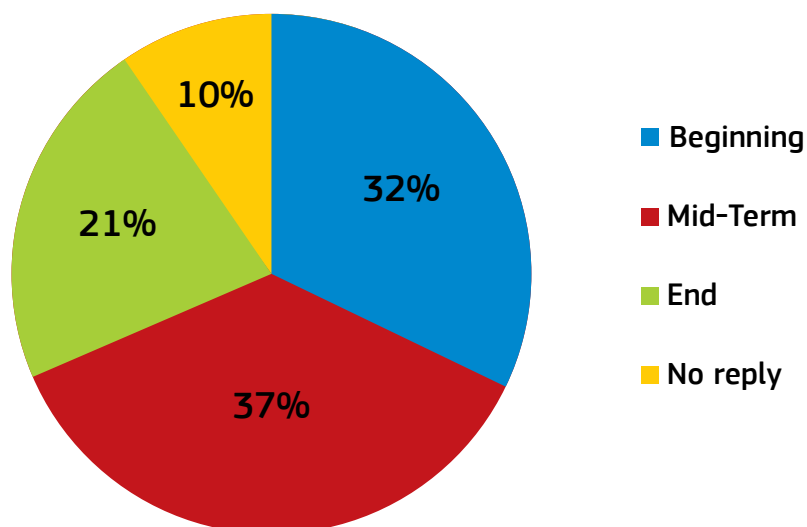
Table 5: Means adopted by active masters (total nr. 19) to ensure sustainability (multiple answers were possible)



When to implement a sustainability strategy

Developing an effective sustainability strategy requires time, planning, and preparation. Consortia should not wait for their EU funding to end to search for alternative sources of funding and to make their project self-sufficient. 32% of active masters stated that their consortia implemented a sustainability strategy **from the beginning** of the project, while 37% developed it mid-term in the course of the programme. The minority, but still a consistent percentage of respondents (21%), stated that they waited until the end of the EU-funding period.

Table 6: Stage of the project when consortia established a sustainability strategy (19 active masters)



In addition to an early start, it is advisable to **review and update** the sustainability strategy and the assessment of the risks and needs annually, in order to decide on changes and improvements. While continuous innovation is necessary, it is also important to safeguard the core components of the programme, i.e. to innovate without losing the identity of the project.

The **involvement of all consortium members** in the development and implementation of the sustainability strategy is another crucial factor. A shared effort guarantees equal commitment and mutual benefits; it can also favour more efficient management and increase capacity to find creative solutions. Close cooperation supports the development of **shared interests** and of **opportunities** to participate in other international projects. Participative management also ensures a fair distribution of costs and efforts. Finally, the academic and research-related outputs of the programme also benefit from a high level of “jointness” between consortium members.

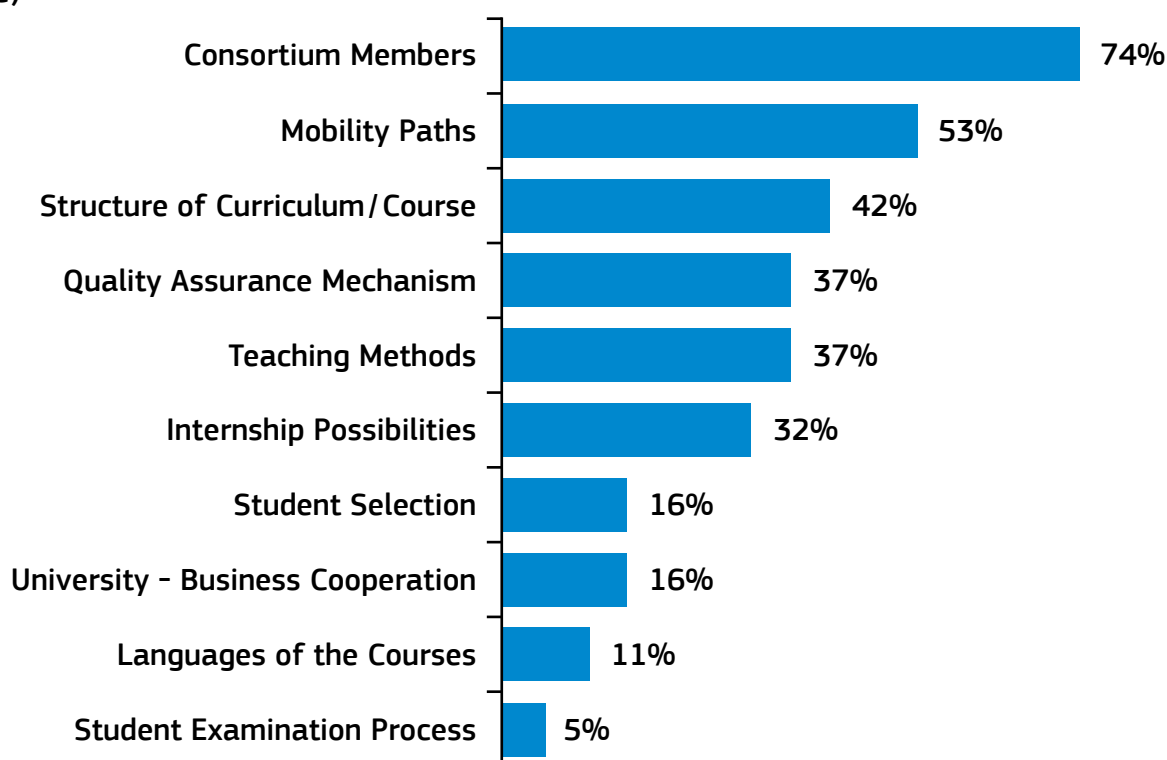
Changes to the masters after the EU funding period

By integrating and internationalising the curricula, EMMCs represent a strategic opportunity to enhance international academic collaboration. They also provide students with international degrees and life-changing experiences, encourage cross-border mobility, and promote intercultural exchange and dialogue. With such a diverse spectrum of functions, they naturally place a strong emphasis on **innovation and modernisation**. The challenges posed by sustainability and by the competitiveness of the market require flexibility. Master programmes must provide a sustainable offer, while attracting students, partners, and funding at the same time.

As seen above, in order to be sustainable, master courses often need to implement procedures and activities that inevitably **alter** their original structure. The active masters in our sample have registered a series of developments that deviated from their initial functioning. These vary from changes in the project partners, to different strategic choices concerning mobility paths, the structure of the curriculum and the contents of the courses. In certain cases, variations originate from lessons learned during the funded implementation of the programme, or from the necessity to reduce costs, or from the subscription of new agreements and partnerships. All these factors are part of a natural evolution of master programmes, of their vitality, and adaptability. It is, however, essential that changes are always faced with attentive supervision and planning.

⁹ B. Delpouve, *Managing Joint Programmes*, in EC-DG EAC, *Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters Degrees. The story so far*, Brussels, 2016, p. 55 (47-58).

Table 7: Changes reported by active masters after the EU funding period (multiple answers possible)



Information channels and promotion tools adopted

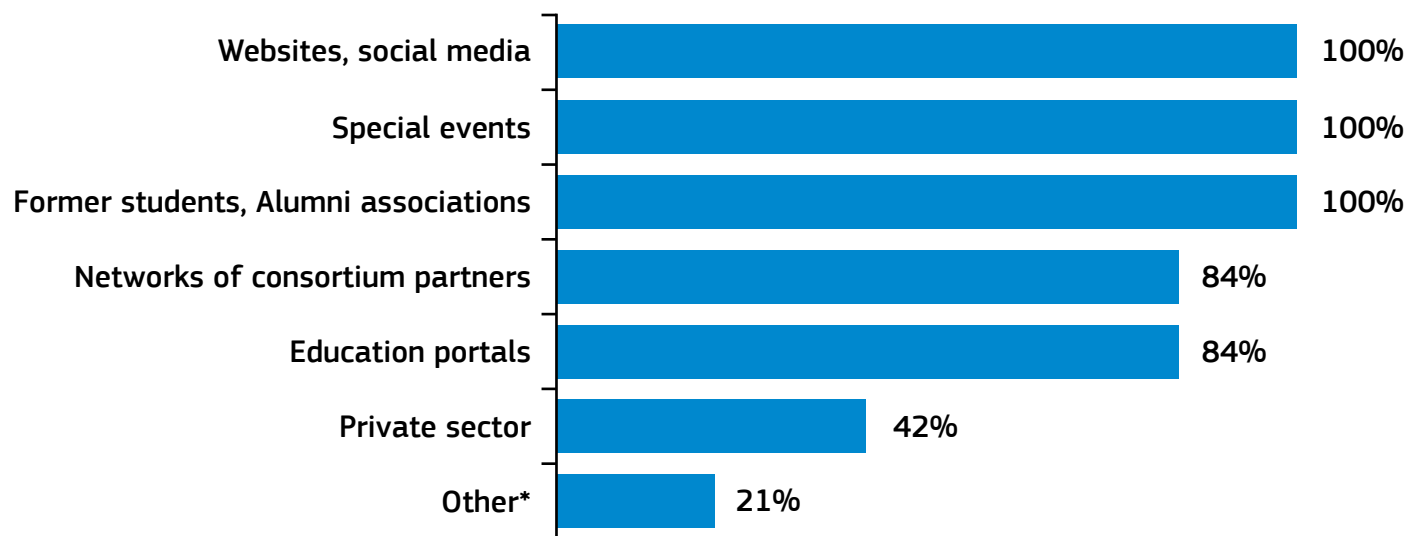
Communication is essential for an effective sustainability strategy. Maximizing diffusion of a programme's outputs and of its graduates' employability, for example, can help to attract new students and to build links to institutions or to the world of work. Such promotional activities should be consistent throughout all stages of programme implementation, as a joint and coordinated effort by all members, and it should address a wide audience: student community, HEIs and academic staff, research institutes and university associations, the world of work, and other institutions.

Consortia have different information channels and promotion tools at their disposal to promote their courses:

- All survey respondents stated that they set-up a **specific website** for their programme; as the first communication window; This website should be clear, correct, and complete, with dynamic features such as videos and blogs, interlinked with partners' websites, and referenced in education web portals. It is also important to monitor visitors and their countries of origin, and to adjust the website and the communication strategy accordingly.
- The organisation of and participation in **special events**, such as fairs, infodays, conferences, etc., is used by all respondents to advertise and promote their course.
- All programmes use **social media** to promote their activities, answer requests for information, and involve students and potential students in their activities.
- All masters mobilise their **network of former students and the alumni associations**, but relying excessively on word-of-mouth can result in an unbalanced geographical distribution of applicants and may not be effective in attracting self-paying students.

- The vast majority of masters (~84%) rely on their network of **consortium partners** and on **education portals**. National and local administrations can be sources of information among student in target countries.
- A considerable percentage of respondents (~42%) strategically involve **contacts from private companies** active in dedicated areas and use their networks.

Table 8: Information channels and promotion tools adopted by active masters (multiple answers possible)



*Other:

- Webinars and web TV.
- Programme leaflets, brochures, posters, newsletters.
- Publications in scientific journals.
- Media appearances of faculty.
- Field trips and research visits of students and faculty
- Network with NGOs, inter-governmental organisations and other actors in relevant fields

As with the implementation of a sustainability strategy, setting up a communication plan requires time. It involves the establishment of a reputation for the master, of international recognition and visibility. This process might take years, but it is nonetheless essential to attract students and financial resources: “Visibility is heavily dependent on promotion, while continuing promotion is a very likely precondition of sustainability”¹⁰.

Enrolment of students

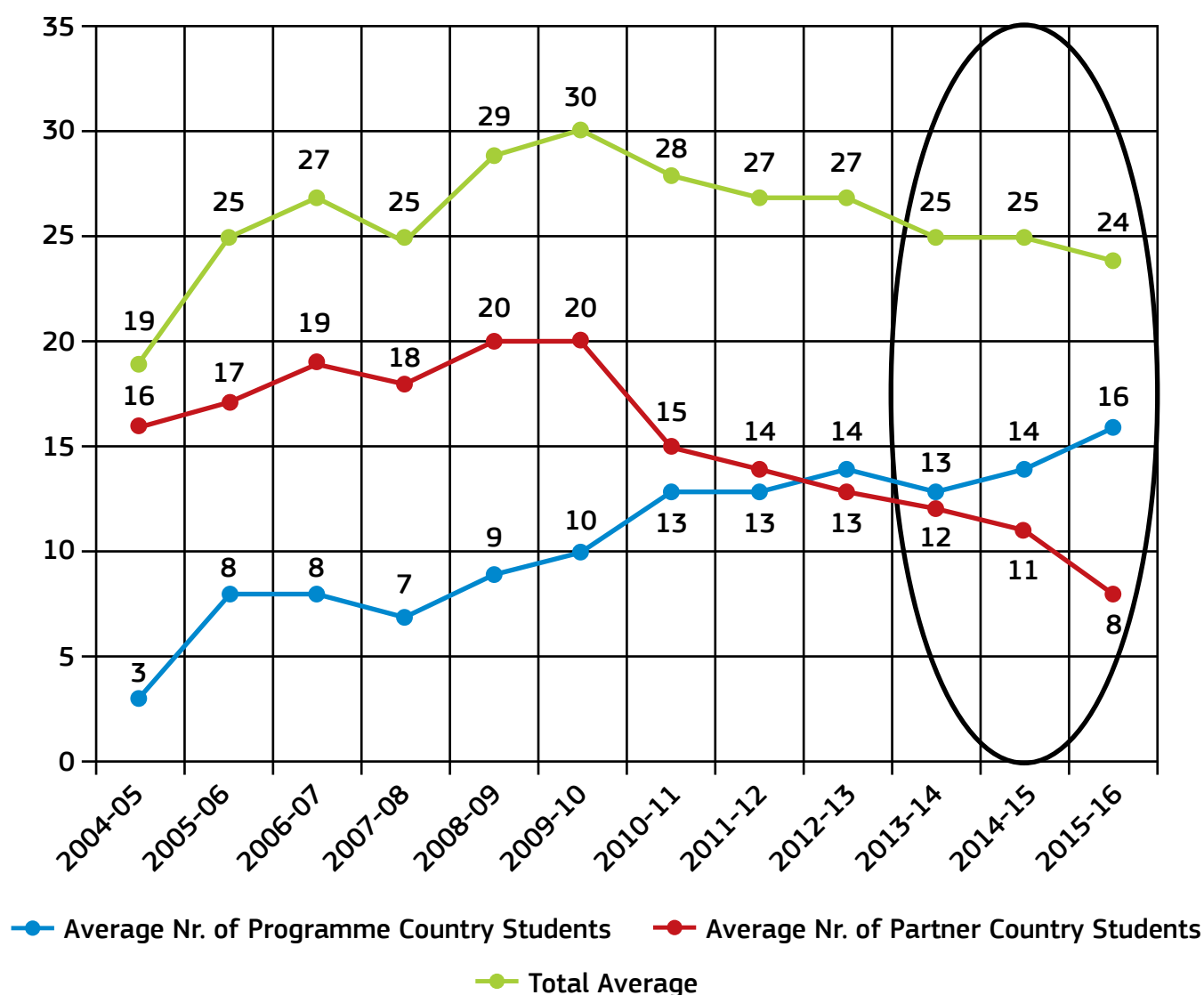
Since its start in 2004, the EM programme has funded more than 18.600 scholarships for master students¹¹. This is already an incentive to enrol in an EMMC (now EMJMD); other **added values** are the high employability rate of EM graduates, the mobility paths offered, and the quality of the education provided. Consortia need to capitalize such potential for attracting students as part of their

¹⁰ EACEA, *Mastering Joint Excellence under Erasmus Mundus. Conclusions of the conference on Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees, Brussels, 29-30 June 2016* (2017). Workshop 3: Promotion; visibility and sustainability, pp. 20-22.

sustainability strategy – as seen above, the participation of self-funded students is one of the main factors in ensuring sustainability.

Most EMMCs are well-established and have built up excellent reputations, which makes them **attractive** to students, however, they seem to be dependent on the EC scholarship scheme and encounter difficulties in attracting as many students without those scholarships (although the participation of self-funded students varies significantly from one programme to another). This has represented a problem also for the master programmes in our sample that remained active after EU funding. We can see in table 9 that since 2013 (when EM funding period began to finish for the active masters selected in 2004, that replied to the Survey) the average number of enrolled students has decreased slightly. The number of students from European countries who pay lower fees has however, grown steadily, over the years. Nevertheless, all active master programmes still host students from partner countries.

Table 9: Average number of students per active master



11 Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters Degrees. The story so far, Brussels, 2016, p. 8.

Other scholarship opportunities

The EM scholarship is very attractive to students. The number of applications is usually high but with success rates of around 8% in 2009, 5-10% in the previous years¹², it is clearly very competitive. Only **the very best students** are selected and interest in EMMCs is great. The **high demand** to participate in an EMMC also indicates the sustainability potential of these programmes. Despite this many EMMCs face sustainability challenges: fewer scholarships available, if any combined with fees and mobility costs, make the recruitment of students harder after the end of the EU funding.

One possible solution is to make the programmes more **financially accessible** for students. Fees should be determined in the business plan. Charging fees without business logic is not advisable, just like unjustified increases of fees are not compatible with a sustainable marketing model. It is also of primary importance to explore possibilities for co-funding, matched funding, or even full funding of scholarships from industries and the public sector, or from own resources.

It is essential to attract the interest of **industry partners** and involve them in the management of the courses and in the definition of contents. This brings greater opportunities for students to take on field work or internships, to participate in events attended by industry stakeholders, and to benefit from grants covering at least their fees or mobility costs. Partial scholarships can also be provided by HEIs or by national programmes. In any case, it is crucial that consortia keep the students informed about **alternative funding opportunities** and ideally assist them in the application process. All active masters in our sample provide this kind of information.

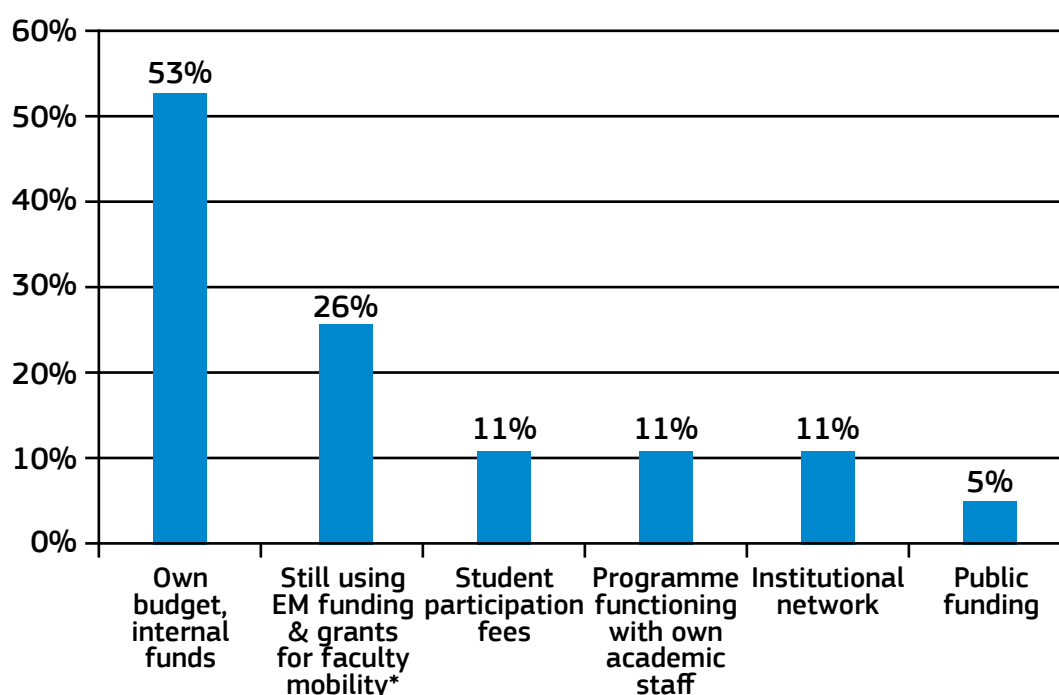
Visiting scholars and guest lecturers

The **internationalisation** of HEIs is one of the key aims of the EM programme. This does not only apply to the students or to the management level of master courses: course delivery needs to be internationalised as well. Visiting scholars and guest lecturers allow universities to share different forms of knowledge, to discuss the results of their research activities, to broaden the spectrum of their investigations, and to include alternative approaches to teaching. Cultural exchanges are beneficial to the institutions, which acquire greater visibility and recognition, and to the students, who have the opportunity to explore different perspectives on their field of study. They also enrich the offer and increase the reputation of EMMCs.

The sustainability of programmes can also be measured by how much, if at all, they maintain or enlarge their **international network and activities** after the end of the funding. Most of the active masters in our sample still host visiting scholars and guest lecturers, attracted by the reputation and visibility of the programmes. Consortia can finance this mobility in different ways, most frequently (53% of replies) through internal funds. Student participation fees and the institutional network are equally used for this purpose (11% of replies) while public funding was made available in only one case (5%). As some of the masters were still implementing their last intake at the time of the Survey, they indicated that they still relied on EM funding (26%), but only a few (11%) stopped hosting visiting scholars and guest lecturers.

¹² For the data on 2009, see the FAQs document on the EACEA website, p. 14. For the data on previous years (namely 2004, 2005, 2006) see the EACEA synthesis report on *Joint International Master programmes: lessons learnt from Erasmus Mundus – the first generation*, Brussels, 2013, p. 19.

Table 10: Means adopted by active masters to ensure funding for visiting scholars and guest lecturers (multiple answers possible)



*These masters were still implementing their last EM funded intake (ending in September 2016) at the time they replied to the Survey.

Degrees awarded

EMMCs are integrated study programmes leading to double, multiple, or joint degrees. They must include, by definition, a high level of **integration** (“jointness”) within the consortia at all levels: criteria and methods of the selection procedures, design of the academic curriculum and implementation procedures, exams and assessments, student services, administrative and financial management, quality assurance mechanisms and performance assessment, promotion and dissemination strategies, awareness raising, etc. “Jointness” constitutes one of the award criteria in the selection decision taken by the EC and EACEA¹³.

Throughout the Bologna process, it has emerged that joint programmes – and joint degrees in particular – can support study recognition, quality, and cross-borders mobility, and improve the employability of graduates. In addition students benefit from the different cultural experiences offered by joint programmes, while HEIs benefit from collaborative research and from the increased visibility of an international consortium. Through joint programmes and the development of strategic partnerships

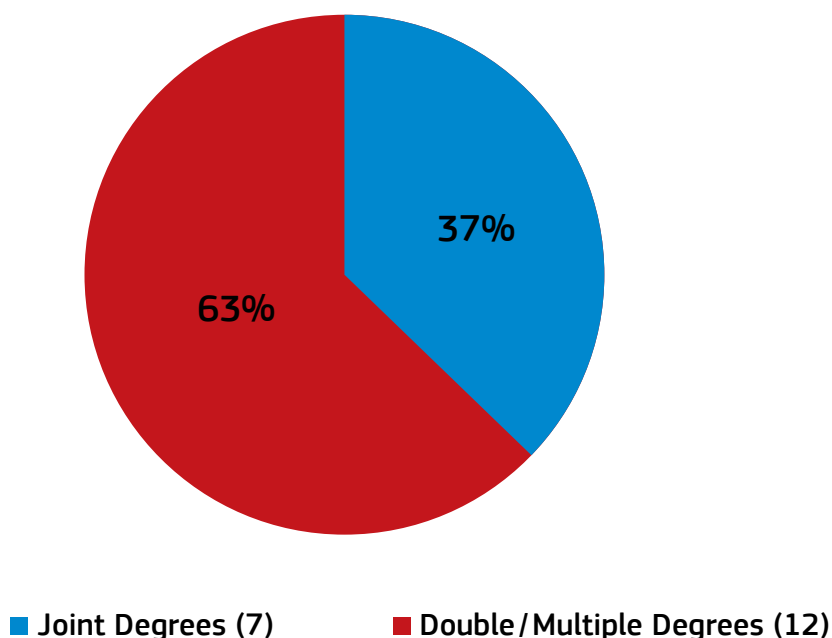
¹³ On the importance of “jointness” see *Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters Degrees. The story so far*, Brussels, 2016. On “jointness” as an award criterion see the *Erasmus+ Programme Guide*, p. 113.

it is possible to **generate revenues and obtain resources** that would be otherwise inaccessible. Awarding joint degrees can therefore be an added value for a programme wanting to enhance its attractiveness.

International academic cooperation poses challenges on the cultural, linguistic, administrative, legal, and logistic levels. Such challenges evolve continuously, forcing consortia to tackle issues that are often unprecedented. The EMJMD representatives that participated in June 2016 in the Conference on Mastering Joint Excellence under Erasmus Mundus, organised by EACEA, agreed that integration is a key factor in the success of joint programmes. Their success can be measured by “the extent to which the students derive an experience which they can regard both as complete, in the sense of having achieved all its stated objectives, and as overflowing, in the sense of opening doors to opportunities that were not there before”¹⁴. To attain such results, careful coordination is required, as well as the ability to face issues that may arise from individual circumstances that cannot be foreseen, and to plan contingencies: “jointness” is a work of careful planning and “fine-tuning”¹⁵.

One of the clearest signs of “jointness” is the awarding of a joint degree at the end of the programme; of the active masters in our sample, 7 (equal to ~37%) award a joint degree, while the remaining 12 (~63%) offer multiple or double degrees. The main reasons why joint degrees are not awarded are linked to legal restrictions.

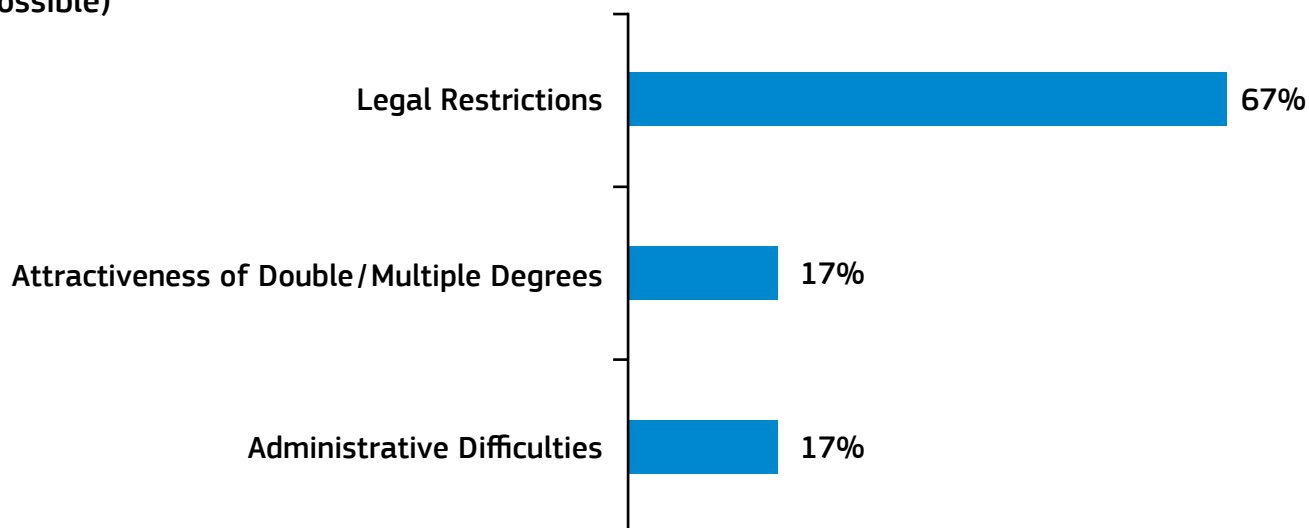
Table 11: Types of degrees awarded by active masters



¹⁴ EACEA, *Mastering Joint Excellence under Erasmus Mundus. Conclusions of the conference on Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees, Brussels, 29-30 June 2016 (2017). Workshop 1: Management and added value of joint programmes*, pp. 12-15.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Table 12: Reasons why a joint degree is not awarded (active masters, multiple replies possible)



Employability of graduates

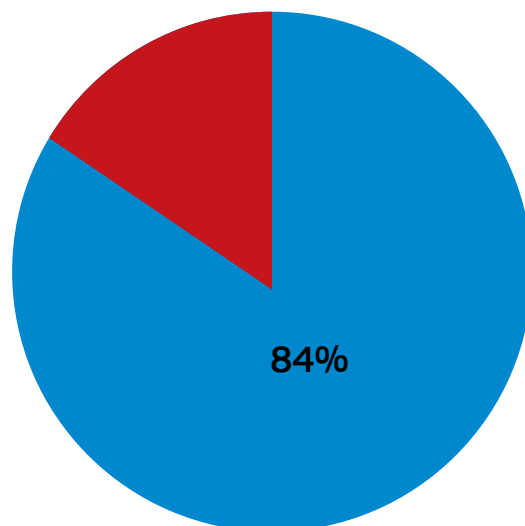
EMMCs (now EMJMDs) provide students with a variety of **opportunities**. By promoting mobility, they encourage intercultural exchanges and the circulation of knowledge and ideas. This leads to extraordinary learning experiences, to the creation of solid networks of alumni and friends, and to enhanced employability perspectives.

The EM Graduate Impact Survey reveals that, in the years 2012-2015, around 66% of EM graduates found a full-time job after completing their master. Around 86% of them took six months or less to find a full-time job. Although these figures are encouraging, around 73% of students indicated that EM courses need to provide more contacts with potential employers, however, 43.5% of graduates acknowledge that the EM programme had a significant impact on their career¹⁶.

Enhancing career opportunities for their graduates is of course a remarkable achievement for a master programme. Not only does it reward students for their efforts, but it also increases the reputation and attractiveness of the programme itself. Strengthening a master's ability to impact on professional opportunities can have a positive effect on its sustainability, as it will be an important factor in convincing potential students to enrol: a degree that can pave the way to a satisfying job or to important career developments may be definitely worth a financial investment from the student's side.

Promotion of the employability of its graduates should be a priority for EMMCs/EMJMDs. The first step to take in this direction is to **track the careers of graduates**, collecting data and information in order to develop a strategy to support their employability. The vast majority of active masters in our sample (16 masters, corresponding to 84%) already carry out this task.

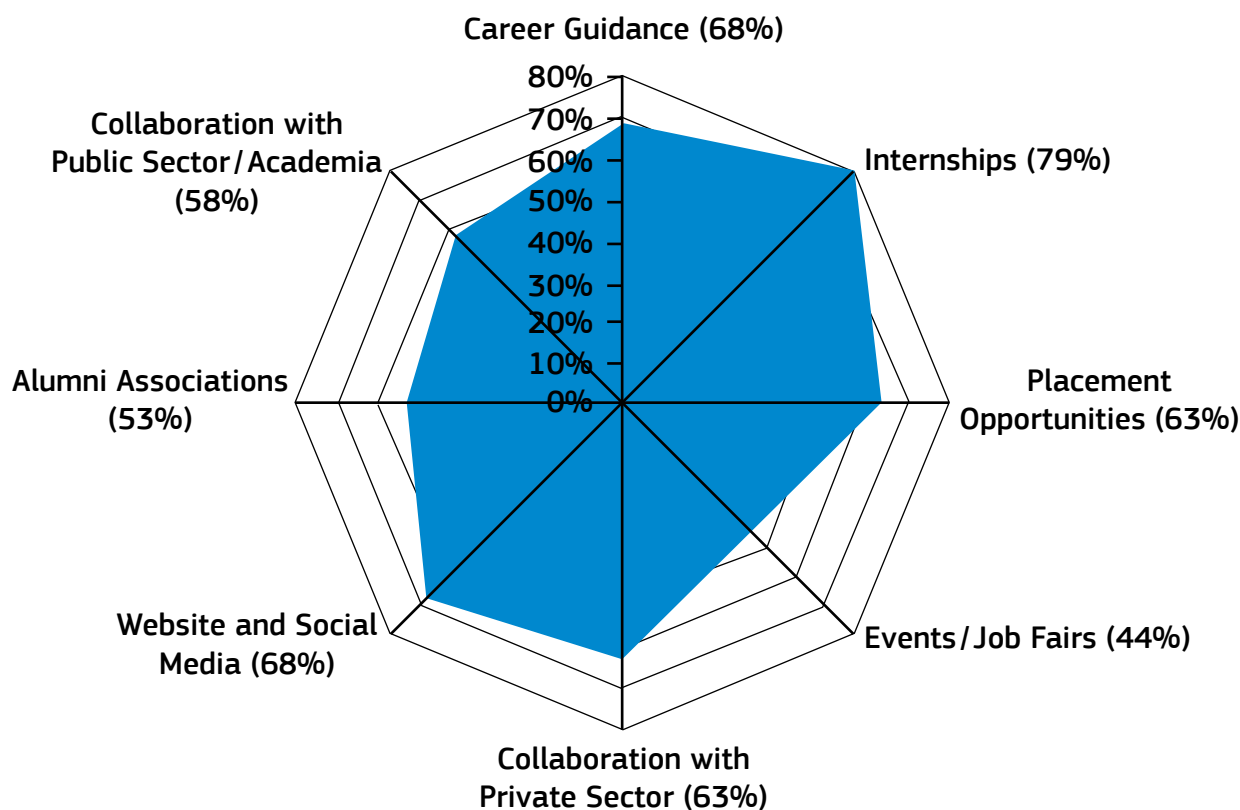
¹⁶ Erasmus Mundus Graduate Impact Survey 2015, pp. 11, 12, 17

Table 13: Active masters monitoring the career developments of graduates

Many initiatives can be undertaken to push forward the employability of graduates in the EHEA. The EC considers education to be of strategic importance for social development and economic growth: modernisation, increased efficiency, and a strong political commitment will be at the core of the Commission's future actions on education. The EC is working to improve the availability of data on graduate employment, support the creation or the enhancement of links between HEIs, businesses and other organisations, promote close interaction between research and teaching, and ensure that adequate investments are made in Higher Education¹⁷.

At the level of HEIs and consortia, a variety of measures can promote the employability of students. In addition to the knowledge and skills provided through the course, the majority of active EMMCs have put in place systems to **integrate** course delivery with the development of employability skills and to open up students' job opportunities and career developments. Most programmes provide students with complementary skills and work experience through internships (79% of the replies of active masters) and other placement opportunities (63%), often organized in collaboration with consortium partners or stakeholders. Quite frequently (68% of the replies) a career guidance system has been implemented. Job opportunities are facilitated through the use of web portals and social media to reach potential employers (68%), while collaboration with the private sector (63%) and with the public sector and academia (58%) is used to develop contacts and to increase the career prospects of the students. Around half of respondents (53%) organise or participate in recruitment events and job fairs. Some institutions (44%) use the networks of Alumni associations to identify career openings for their graduates.

¹⁷ EC, *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Improving and Modernising Education*, Brussels, 7.12.2016.

Table 14: Means adopted to promote employability (active masters, multiple replies possible)

These measures are in line with recommendations outlined in the specific meeting on employability organised between 2010 and 2011 by EACEA, including¹⁸:

- Reinforcing “jointness” at all levels of cooperation of the consortium, strengthening partners’ commitment, making full use of their complementary skills, learning from their respective approaches, and increasing internationalisation and visibility of the course
- Developing professional partnerships for academia, creating connections between EMMCs and the labour market, integrating internships for students in order to provide them with practical learning experiences
- Involving students and alumni in course management and in promotion activities

While a high employability rate can be a driver for the sustainability of master courses, the measures to promote employability discussed in this paragraph will be more effective and beneficial if implemented over the long term.

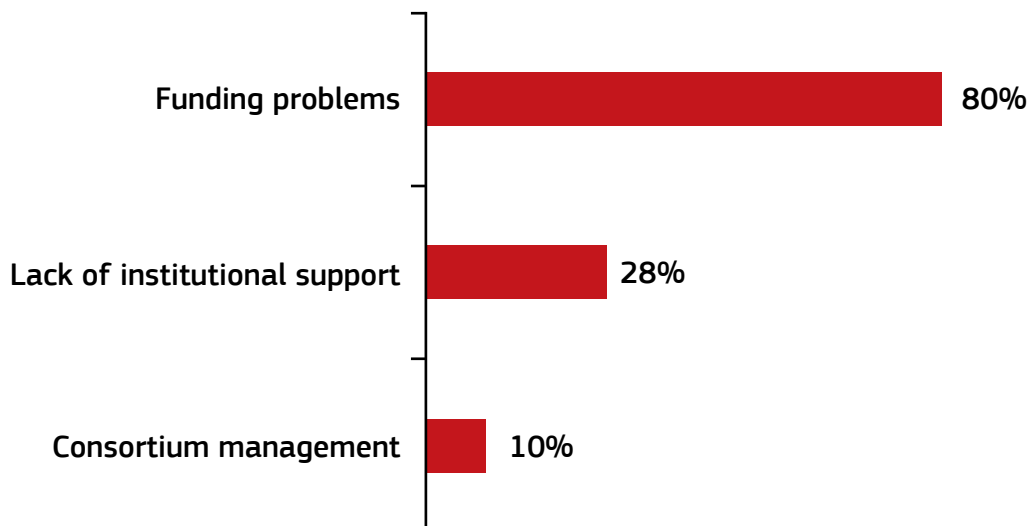
¹⁸ Erasmus Mundus Practical Guidelines. Clustering Masters Courses and Attractiveness Projects: Thematic Cluster on Employability, 2011, pp. 22-24.

Difficulties encountered

The complexity of sustainability requires a joint effort from the consortia as well as careful planning. A sustainability strategy needs to be carefully developed and implemented. The data collected in this Report will help consortia to have an overview of the most relevant issues that should be taken into consideration. The following chapter provides examples of good practices that have been put into place by successful EMMCs.

Consortia should however also be aware of **risk factors** that may hinder the process of ensuring the sustainability of their programmes. The EMMCs in our sample that have ceased their activities (20 in total) have reported on the difficulties they encountered. Funding problems were the most frequent issue (80% of the replies), but the lack of institutional support should not be underestimated either (28%). Only in two cases (10% of the replies) was management of the consortium problematic. In this Report, specific solutions have been proposed to such challenges.

Table 15: Difficulties encountered by the 20 inactive masters in the sample (multiple replies possible)



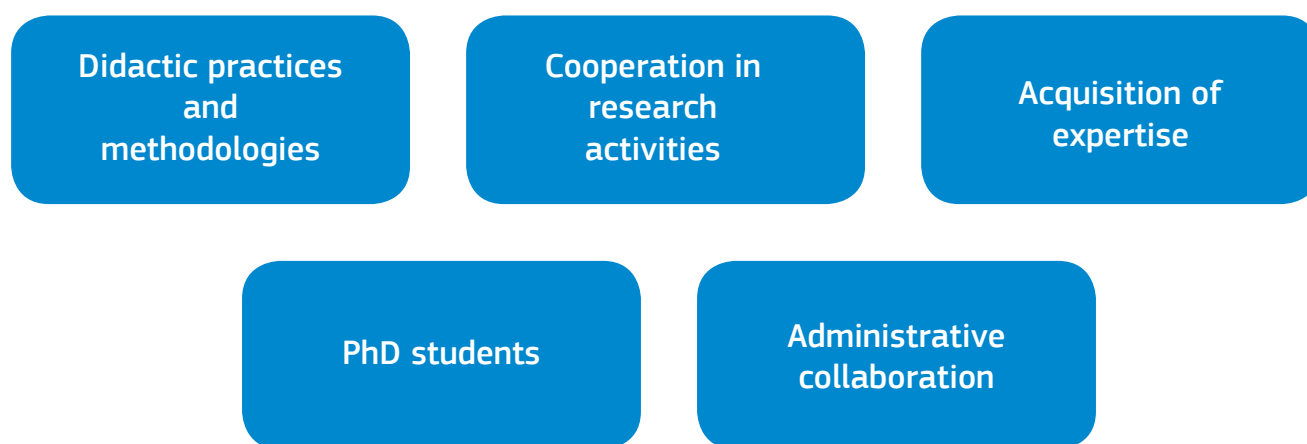
Institutional impact

All Survey respondents (both active and inactive masters) found the institutional impact positive in their experience in the EM programme. Academic collaboration; joint administrative management; a coordinated effort to provide services for students; a predefined structured partnership and definition of roles between consortium members; as well as the development of common evaluation methods and criteria, are all crucial in setting up and delivering a joint programme. These factors (and many other) transform and bring changes to the institutions in many ways. The Survey respondents regard such developments as **relevant acquisitions**; they have listed a series of important consequences stemming from their participation in the EM programme, which can be grouped under the following five categories:

1. **Improvement of didactic practices and methodologies.** Through the mutual exchange of information, competences and expertise, institutions can learn from one another and develop together new and innovative approaches.

2. **Development of strong links and cooperation in research activities, even outside of the master programme.** Joint coordination leads to frequent purposeful interactions; running a programme together also facilitates communication and creates contacts and occasions for discussion, resulting in easier collaborations.
3. As a result of point 2 (above), it is easier for institutions to acquire **expertise in order to apply for other EU-funded programmes.** Participating in an EM programme provides a valuable knowledge of administrative procedures, evaluation criteria, good practice examples, etc., which constitute an asset in the development of new projects.
4. The high number of EMMC students that have enrolled in a PhD in one of the host institutions. Participation in EM programmes increases **the visibility, reputation, and internationalisation of institutions**; it is also a clear indication of the high quality of their course delivery and research. All of these aspects strengthen the attractiveness of the courses.
5. **Changes in administrative procedures** that are in line with the aims and framework of the Bologna process. Such changes are due to the harmonization of practices required by the development of EM programmes.

Table 16: Five types of institutional impact of EM funding



It can be seen from the list that the impact of EMMCs has been significant on at least two levels: on one hand, HEIs have seen an increase in their visibility and international recognition, on the other, the implementation of EMMCs has brought structural changes to the institutions. Some of the factors that have improved the **visibility** of the institutions are:

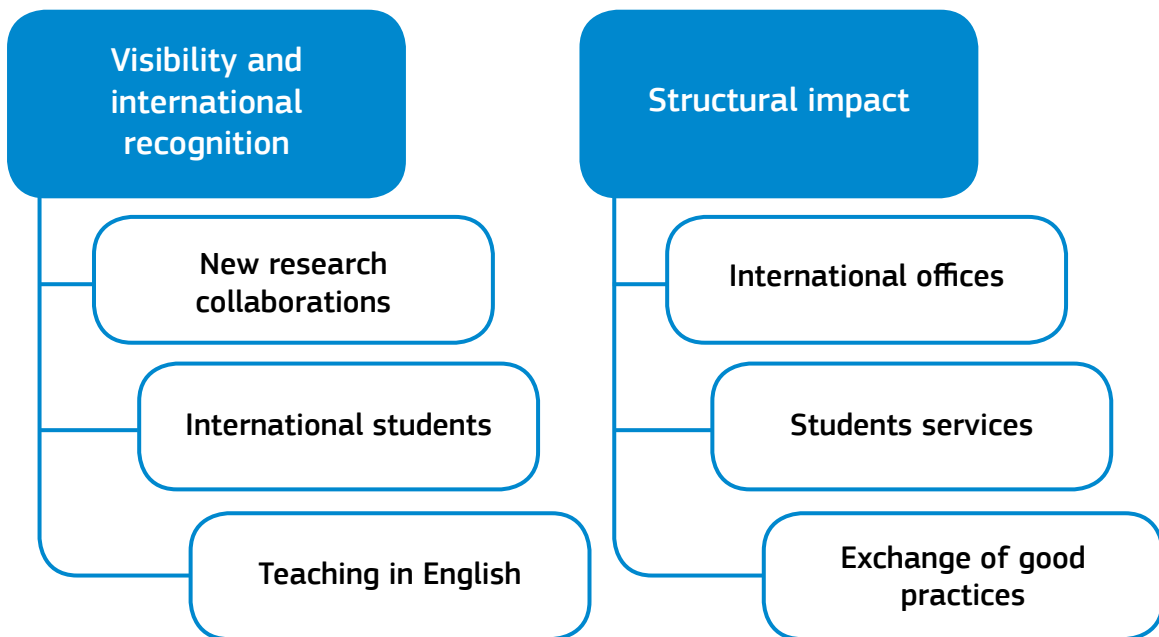
- **The development of new research collaborations** (point 2 above), on the basis of equal commitment to the project and of shared interests
- **The increased number of students**, also at PhD level (point 4 above). Since EMMCs are designed to attract students from non-European countries, and considering the visibility and the quality of the courses, participating institutions have registered an increase in the number of international students

- **The introduction or increase of classes taught in English**, linked to the internationalisation of students, to the need to integrate them in academic activities, and to developing or strengthening the international reputation

Concerning the **structural changes**, some of the relevant achievements are :

- **The establishment or enlargement of international offices** to address the management of the consortium, the mobility of students, the evaluation procedures, the awarding of the degrees etc.
- **The implementation or improvement of student services**, which are essential to face the issues that students coming from different countries may encounter and also help ensure the smooth management of the programmes
- **The exchange and adoption of best practices** to deliver simpler or more effective procedures, both administrative and educational (see above point nr. 5)

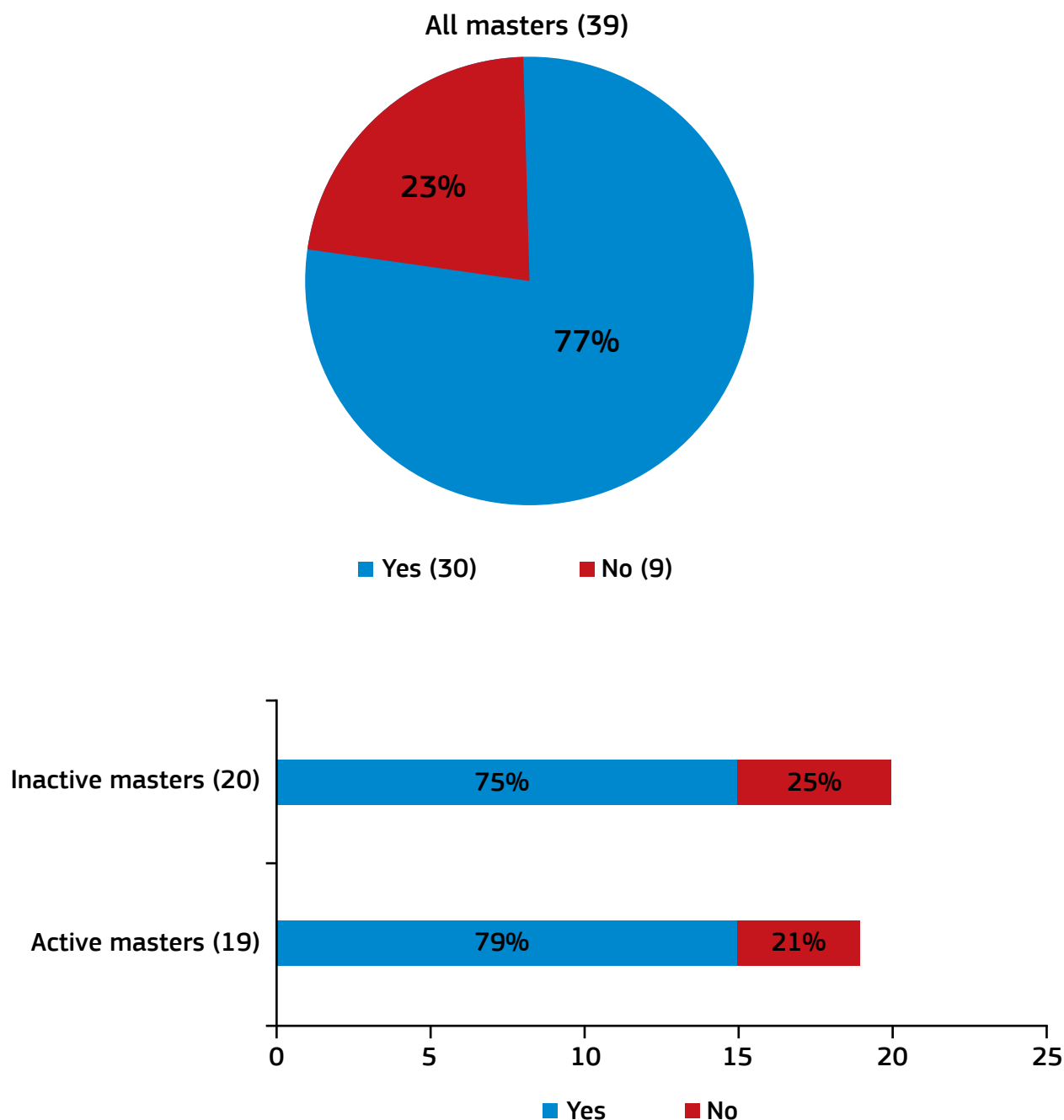
Table 17: Positive institutional developments



An encouraging signal comes from the data on participation in other EU-funded projects: 77% of respondents stated that their institution or consortium is actively involved in HE cooperation programmes sponsored by the European Commission (including other EMMCs and EMJMDs). Although the number is slightly higher for active masters (79%), than for inactive masters (75%), this indicates that European HEIs rely on and trust EU-backed projects, that the attractiveness of such projects is high, and that students, researchers, and scholars benefit from such initiatives.

This is an important recognition of the EU’s efforts and investments in developing international cooperation in Higher Education, promoting initiatives that offer a truly European learning experience to students.

Tables 18 and 19: “Is your university or consortium now involved in other EU-funded HE cooperation programmes (including EMMCs or EMJMDs)?”



TESTIMONIALS OF SUCCESSFUL MASTERS

Survey respondents were asked to describe examples of good practices identified during the implementation of the master. Other examples, and more detailed examples, were also cited in the follow-up interviews conducted with coordinators of some of the master that are still active. These testimonials have been grouped into four categories¹⁹:

1. **Sustainability strategies.** The identification of initiatives to secure appropriate resources and sustainable practices is at the core of the Survey; it is also one of the main concerns for consortia, which need to find alternative sources of income and ways to make the programmes self-sufficient.
2. **Course attractiveness.** It is important to maintain the inflow of students by strengthening the attractiveness of the courses, and at the same time to ensure that they receive excellent academic course delivery, services, and assistance in exchange. This is perhaps even more relevant in the case of self-paying students, who are the main source of income for master programmes (see table 5).
3. **Course delivery.** EMMCs (and now EMJMDs) should represent the EHEA and increase the quality of European Higher Education. They are expected to provide a high standard of teaching.
4. **“Jointness” and internationalisation.** While “jointness” is a requirement for the selection of EMMCs/EMJMDs as well as one of the key factors in the management of the courses, internationalisation is both tightly connected to “jointness” and an asset for the visibility and attractiveness of HEIs.

Sustainability strategies

A strategic move, which usually brings advantages both to HEIs (in terms of structural cooperation) and to the students (in terms of job opportunities), is to develop **partnerships** with private entities and with a network of stakeholders.

We have increased the involvement of relevant stakeholders and actors from the sector, implementing strategic partnerships. By allowing the free participation of private partners in the training courses, we have secured a number of paid internships for our students, while our partners have access to well-trained resources. This is definitely a win-win situation!

¹⁹ The testimonials quoted in the following section of the report have been collected from the replies to the Survey and the follow-up telephone interviews.

Collaboration with **specific institutions and target countries** can also help to increase the number of students and to ensure greater possibilities for them.

Our strategy is to establish specific cooperation with target countries (mainly in Asia) and institutions (most of our students come from these institutions). We regularly visit these institutions and promote the programme to the students there. We do not target only HEIs, but research labs as well and we have developed collaborations in both research and education with such partners. For my own research activity, for example, I now have several shared projects with colleagues from Thailand, India, and Japan. And the students benefit from these collaborations too, as we propose them topics for their dissertations that they can address interacting directly with our partners in Asia.

The **enlargement** of the consortium strengthens the position of the programme in terms of available resources and visibility.

Two important universities joined the consortium, thus we have broadened our marketing scope and increased our capacity. We have asked our partners a commitment in the form of annual allocations of scholarships, according to their possibilities.

If possible, spending resources to promote the **development and growth** of the programme can be a good investment.

We have hired a Marketing and Business Development Officer to help us improve our internationalization, to communicate with new partners, and to study new market areas. This person has been assessing the popularity of the programme and how it should be presented to the market, which includes the way that the course and the department in general present themselves on the web.

The identification of the programme's position in the market and the development of a **marketing plan** are essential to determine the real potential of the programme and to make strategic decisions.

An internationalization officer in the faculty has led a market analysis, working with a focus group composed by current students and alumni. Through the investigation of the market we have been able to determine for example the amount of tuition fees that prospective students are willing to pay.

The recruitment of students can be promoted through **dedicated agents and webinars**.

Our faculty undertook a review of the EM course that led to the employment of additional recruitments agents. We also use online webinars to engage applicants at an early stage and throughout the recruitment process.

Course attractiveness

In order to increase the attractiveness of the programmes and ensure that education remains accessible, some consortia have tried to **reduce course fees and offer scholarships**.

The programme took advantage of national legislations and promoted low course fees [...] to secure finances for scholarships. Alongside consortium scholarships, other opportunities have been identified to help self-financed students. The strategy to charge low course fees, combined with consortium and external scholarships, is a strong incentive for self-funded students to apply.

In certain cases, even while receiving European funding, institutions have assisted students without an EM scholarship in searching for **other financial opportunities**

Participants who are not selected for the Erasmus Mundus grants are immediately informed about other funding opportunities. This gives them time to look for other resources and to decide whether they can afford the programme or not. Since the beginning of the course, they are supported in the application process for other scholarships.

Students have also been offered **job opportunities or internships**, thanks to specific agreements between private partners and companies.

Students can work on their final projects within a company, which often results in a job offer at the end of the semester. We also invite our partners from private companies to teach classes throughout the programme; this is another important asset, because it gives to the students a better idea of what those companies are like and what they look for. It is also an opportunity for the companies to identify the best students and those with the profiles that correspond to their interests.

To help students entering the world of work, collaborations with **private partners** can be activated; some programmes combine studies and work experience.

Even before the programme started, we had already established research collaboration with many companies; now, thanks to specific agreements, we work with them and they provide internship opportunities to our students in exchange.

Webinars and other similar initiatives can be used to **engage students** during the recruitment phase, and ensure that they will submit their application

We have a few webinars to give a presentation of the course: we go through our history in coming together as a consortium, outline the focus of the course, and show some examples of the classes. We also explain the value of a joint master programme and describe a little bit the Bologna process. Then, we have Q&A sessions, where we invite current students and alumni to participate. Our institution organises open days, where perspective students and applicants can come and speak to us. In the webinars, we have tried to replicate the same experience. Our target is composed of people who are going through the application process and people who have received an offer but have not yet accepted it.

Involving students in the decision-making process can be a positive way of strengthening the **inclusiveness** of the course and of ensuring that their needs and requests are taken into account.

Students actively contribute to the management of the course: their representatives participate in the meetings of the steering committee and there are students and alumni that are members of the advisory board.

Course delivery

Some courses have adapted to the end of their EU funding by introducing a degree of **flexibility** in how they deliver the lectures. Several ways of attending the programme can be devised (it must be noted, however, that no virtual mobility is allowed during the EM funding period).

Students can attend the programme on campus, via distance learning, or both. This flexible approach is designed to meet their needs and to make attendance more convenient to them.

Video lectures are a good solution to **reduce costs and expenses**.

To decrease teaching costs, we organize lectures in the form of video conferences. 12 ECTS are shared between consortium members. In this way, not only we have reduced travel expenses, but we have also ensured greater participation to the lectures.

Another approach can be to **embed** the course into the regular teaching activities of the institutions. This can be an advantage for students as well.

The course was embedded into the regular teaching activities. This was done for two reasons: one, foreign students receive a greater support and are more easily involved into the academic life. The other, our own national students benefit from a more international environment.

Online courses can be a useful tool. They reduce the costs of course delivery and at the same time allow greater participation in activities.

We have an extensive experience with online resources and we determined that we could use them for specific topics. Of course, online courses have to be combined with face to face activities: they give to the students the possibility to learn, practice, and do exercises online, but it is always better to meet the students and discuss the problems they may face, the results they have achieved, their methodologies, and so on. There must always be a follow-up to online activities. We combine traditional and online courses for individual training and teamwork; online courses are a great resource in this case, because they allow students to work together even if they are split across different universities and locations.

While activities involving travel expenditures are least sustainable, they can constitute an important investment to **increase the quality** of the course, e.g. in the case of visiting scholars.

The participation of visiting scholar to didactic activities provides a significant enrichment of the curriculum offered by the institutions. Visiting scholars represent an effective solution to the issue of hosting outstanding researchers that consolidate the quality and excellence of the programme. This also leads to fruitful exchanges and to the internationalisation of the institutions.

The difficulty in finding resources to finance visiting scholars can be reduced by **enlarging the participation** in such initiatives.

Visiting scholars are often sponsored in cooperation with the research institutes of the universities involved, thus widening the scope of the programme and making it more known to students and staff.

Ensuring **social and intellectual interaction** between students, as well as between students and the faculty, is another example of how to give an added value to the programme.

We organize a summer school where students, faculty from consortium members, and external guest speakers meet for two weeks of workshops, presentations, lectures and field trips. Our summer school strengthens the “jointness” of the programme, in both academic and social terms.

Such initiatives contribute to the development of a sense of **unity and cohesion** among the programme participants.

The organization of periodic student workshops helps to give an identity and a sense of belonging to the community of students.

“Jointness” and internationalisation

Developments in academic and administrative practices can improve the implementation and management of the programmes, through the implementation of **joint initiatives**.

Throughout the programme we have developed common practices: we have built an academic and an administrative team formed by representatives of every consortium member to manage the activities of the programme. On top of that, we organise two meetings a year between consortium members, to discuss on-going issues and decide on policies and strategies.

Once consolidated, such practices can become **solid guidelines and standard procedures** to follow, supporting the management of the programme.

The programme had a huge impact on consortium members concerning the administration processes. The obstacles and requirements of an international programme have become known to the departments and to the ruling bodies of the involved universities. Now we know how expensive it is to create such a programme and how to manage it. New procedures to establish joint programmes have been put in place, to ensure that programmes are feasible and follow national legislation. We have also produced flowcharts that describe how the workload should be distributed among all partners.

Achieving a good level of “jointness” requires **time and preparation**. This is why it is generally advisable to build a project around a pre-existing group of partners, who know each other and have previous experience of working together, or at least share common interests.

We have implemented joint curricula, we organise joint mobility, and we work together a lot. We really try to ensure unity in diversity! This is for us a big challenge. I think that creating a master course only to participate in the EM programme is a wrong approach. We have been running since 1994, we already had a cooperation in place before the EM programme, which helped us nonetheless to become even stronger and to be more consistent. It has helped us to do things better.

The effort behind the development of joint master degrees will pay off. International cooperation between HEIs and research groups creates important connections and can **facilitate** the organisation of and participation in other international projects.

In order to start the adventure of a new Erasmus Mundus Master, you need to have already some sort of partnership with the colleagues you would like to involve. First of all you need to have an initial agreement and good relations with people you trust and who can work with you for a long time. These kinds of contacts are usually made through research activities: you know your colleagues because they work on topics that are close to your area of specialisation. The master programme will lead to more exchanges, more contacts, and more interactions. Thus, when new opportunities arise, especially at the European level, the team is immediately ready to take on a new project and move forward. In this way, potentially you build teams that are ready to participate in many European calls. In our case, for example, we are involved in several large EU projects, and this collaboration only came from the fact that we have been working together in the past. This is also important for the collaboration with private companies, because they will know that there is a team of people that they can rely on and work together with.

A **solid network and a reputation of excellence** are key factors to increase the visibility of the institutions and to enhance exchanges and scientific cooperation.

The reputation and network of the master programme is such, that all consortium members attract scholars for exchange and cooperation.

Constant **innovation and improvement**, however, are just as necessary.

Our consortium constantly revises and updates its plans, strategies, contents of the course, etc. We ensure this joint approach by regularly scheduling workshops and meetings with all consortium members, discussing issues as diverse as methodology, how to approach a dissertation for a joint degree, how to work together, and so on.

By acquiring greater **recognition** and strengthening **visibility**, consortia can also secure more resources and support from their own institutions.

Our institution considered the EM programme as one of the key factors to enhance its own visibility. Therefore, we have received from early on great support from the head of the faculty; it was the same at all levels: the administrative process involves not only our department, but many other resources as well, and we have had complete assistance from all sectors. Something similar has happened to our partners as well.

“Jointness” and internationalisation are one of the greatest **assets** of the EM programmes. They mobilise and attract people and resources, they generate further cooperation, enhance academic research and they can even shape academic and administrative procedures. In conclusion, they bring an added value to EMMCs (and EMJMDs), and to HEIs as well.

The capacity to collaborate is the capacity to understand complexity, to deal with complexity. This is where a real innovation of the education system can take place.



CONCLUSIONS

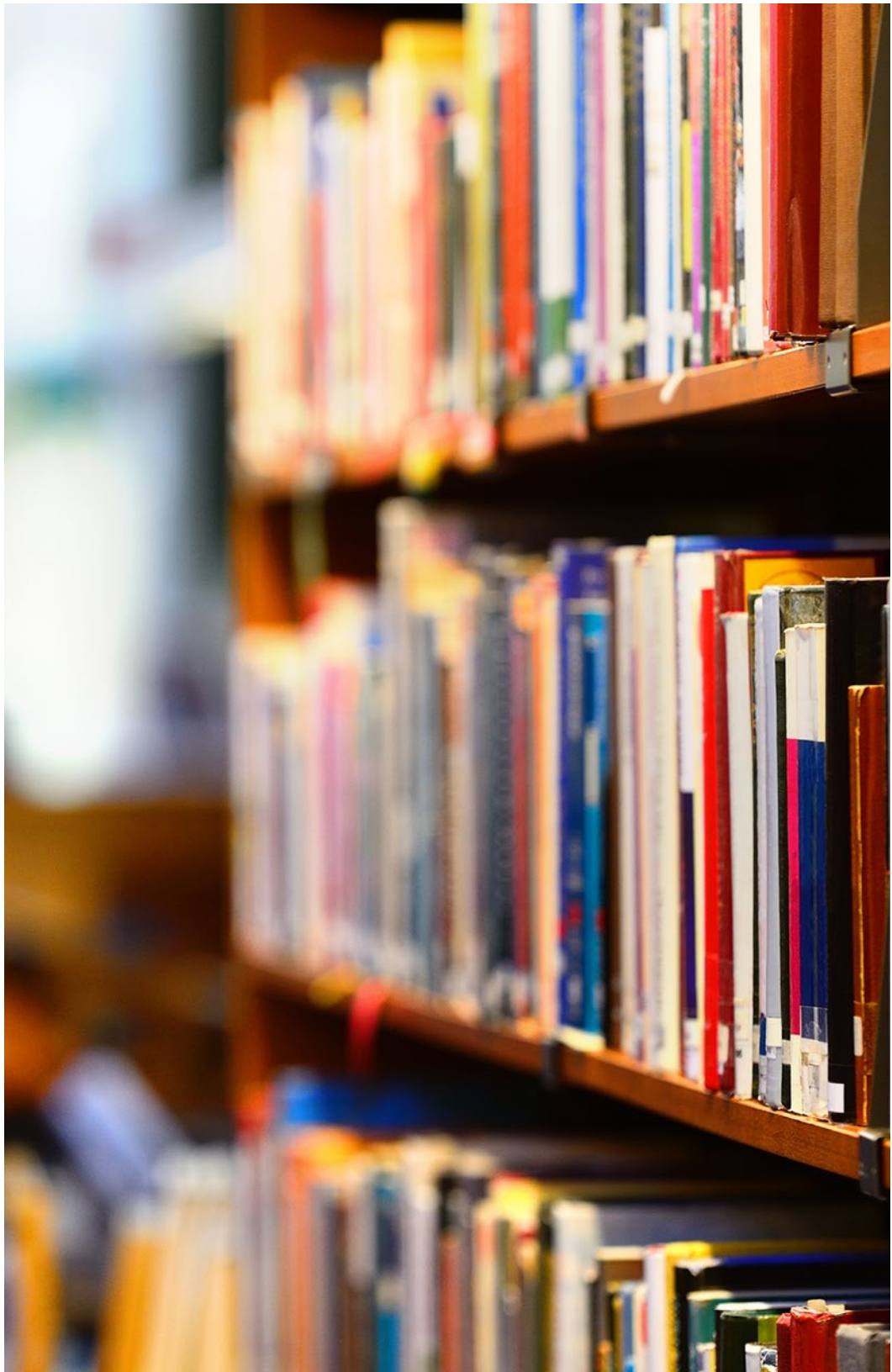
Sustainability needs to be considered as a complex concept comprising not only financial aspects. An EMJMD can represent many benefits for participating institutions. These can include the positive long term impact of integrated Master courses in terms of integration, continued cooperation within the consortium and beyond, research collaborations, improvement of administrative procedures and transparency and international visibility. Benefits also extend to innovation related to curriculum design and course provision, quality assurance and increased employability of graduates.

A tailor-made sustainability strategy needs to be developed and included in the original design of each Master programme. This strategy needs to be elaborated jointly by all consortium members and may involve external experts. A broad approach is required, taking into consideration the employability of graduates, the international visibility of participating institutions and adapted promotion and communication methods. The setting up of a concrete financial plan detailing all expenses and resources required for the continuation of the course constitutes an essential element of the sustainability strategy.

The reputation of the Master courses and the attractiveness to self-funded students, who are the main source of income for these programmes, are certainly central to ensuring the continued inflow of students. The implementation of an adapted promotion strategy and the provision of information to potential candidates on scholarship opportunities (other than the Erasmus Mundus scheme) are important elements. Links to the world of work, high employability rates of graduates as well as the involvement of visiting scholars and guest lecturers in the programme are also key factors which contribute to a reputation of excellence and to international visibility. Apart from the excellent quality of academic course provision, students also need to receive adequate and comprehensive services and administrative support.

“Jointness”, which is an essential aspect in all phases of the setting up and implementation of EMJMDs also plays an important role in the framework of the sustainability strategy. The internationalisation of the Master programme is enhanced by the collaboration between consortium partners and constitutes an asset to the visibility of the programmes and institutions.

The sustainability strategy should also imply innovation and a certain degree of flexibility related to the course delivery after the end of Erasmus Mundus funding (e.g. online courses, blended learning), which may reduce costs while ensuring the high quality and teaching standards of the Master course.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Improving and Modernising Education, Brussels, December 2016.

The Erasmus Impact Study. Effects of mobility on the skills and employability of students and the internationalisation of Higher Education institutions (European Commission – DG EAC), Luxembourg, 2014.

Erasmus Mundus. Clustering joint programmes and attractiveness projects: sustainability, recognition of degrees and joint degrees. Survey Report (Ecorys), 2012.

Erasmus Mundus Graduate Impact Survey (report by T. Krüger and K. Klein), 2015.

Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters Degrees. The story so far (European Commission – DG EAC), Brussels, 2016.

Erasmus Mundus Practical Guidelines. Clustering joint programmes and attractiveness projects: Thematic cluster on sustainability, 2012.

Erasmus Mundus Practical Guidelines. Clustering masters courses and attractiveness projects: Thematic cluster on employability (MKW Wirtschaftsforschungs GmbH in cooperation with Céreq – Centre des études et des recherches sur les qualifications), 2011,

European Commission *Daily News*, October 2016.

Handbook on Sustainability. Sustainability of international cooperation projects in the field of Higher Education and vocational training (European Commission – DG EAC), Luxembourg, 2006.

Joint International Master programmes: lessons learnt from Erasmus Mundus – the first generation (EACEA synthesis report), Brussels, 2013.

Mastering Joint Excellence under Erasmus Mundus. Conclusions of the conference on Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees, Brussels, 29-30th June 2016 (EACEA, report by H. Davies), 2017.

State of the Union 2016, by Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, September 2016.

Sustainability of Erasmus Mundus Master Courses

Best practice guide based on survey results and analysis

May 2017

This Report outlines the results of the Survey on the sustainability of Erasmus Mundus Master Courses launched in March 2016 by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency.

Contact us

For more information please consult our website

www.eacea.ec.europa.eu

eacea-info@ec.europa.eu

